many forerunners, beginning with the Oriental despotisms of antiquity. But in its present form it came out of Russia, and it has never cut the umbilical cord uniting it to that country.

Communism has surrounded itself with myths. The Communists are credited with the overthrow of Tsarism, the liberation of Russia, and its transformation from a country of illiterate muzhiks into a great industrial power. The common idea is that economic and cultural progress in Russia was ushered in by the Communist revolution. Accordingly, everything that Russia possesses of value is credited to the efforts of the men in the Kremlin.

Actually, Russia looks back at centuries of economic and cultural growth.

The November revolution represents a brief interruption of, rather than the beginning of, the country's cultural progress. Russia's industrialization and westernization were inaugurated in the first half of the eighteenth century by the reforms of Peter the Great. Subsequently her economic development paralleled that of Western European countries, lagging behind the most advanced of them but leaving many others in the rear. The contention of the Soviet leaders that Russia has been built under the Communist regime is sheer nonsense. What they can claim to their credit is the acceleration of progress along certain lines, an achievement that must be weighed against retardation of progress or setbacks in other directions.

On the eve of the revolution of 1917, Russia was a country of striking contrasts. It was primarily an agricultural country, richly endowed with almost all natural resources—coal, petroleum, iron ore, light metals, gold, silver, and platinum. But it was unevenly and only partially developed. It had the largest and most efficient cotton mills in Europe, and its textiles competed successfully with those of the British in Asia. It had modern steel mills that turned out bridges unequaled in the Eastern Hemisphere. Its shipyards not only met the needs of extensive river transportation but could also launch battleships and submarines. Its heavy locomotives, cannons, and rifles were considered among the best in Europe. Moreover, its industrial and mineral output was expanding steadily, though not rapidly enough to meet the needs of the growing population and the military requirements of the Empire.

True, the Russian educational system was inadequate. Some rural areas were poorly provided with elementary schools, but illiteracy was decreasing. The "illiterate muzhik" was disappearing. Though the network of high schools and universities was insufficient, the institutions that did exist were on a reasonably high academic level, providing students with an education comparable with that supplied by similar